

Elder Aaron Leland



ELDER AARON LELAND.

Distinguished as
Preacher, Judge, Legislator, Councillor,
and for five years
Lieut. Governor of The State of Vermont.

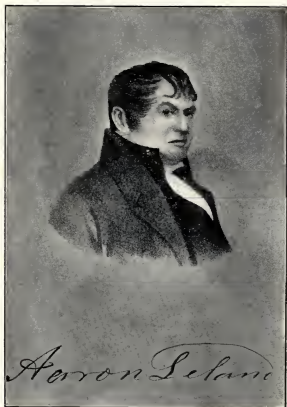
Founder of the First Baptist Church, Chester, Vt.,
and for forty-six years its pastor.

BY
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NOTE.

This paper was read before the Vermont Baptist Historical Society, in Burlington, Vt., Sept. 25, 1901, and is published at the earnest request of many who wish to preserve this memorial of so interesting and worthy a man.



GENEALOGY.

Rev. Aaron Leland was the son of Asa Leland and Lois Marshall, and was born in Holliston, Mass., May 28, 1761. Died in Chester, Vt., Aug. 25th, 1832. He was thrice married; first to Joanna Alden, second to Eunice Rockwood, third to Sarah Webb. He had no children.

Asa Leland, father of Aaron Leland, was son of Samuel Leland and Dinah White, born in Holliston, Mass., in 1738; died in Chester, Vt., 1822.

Samuel Leland, father of Asa, was the son of John Leland and Abigail Babcock, born in Sherburn, Mass., 1711, died in Holliston, Mass., 1783.

John Leland, father of Samuel Leland, was the son of Hopestill Leland and Patience Holbrook; born in Sherburn, Mass., 1687; died in Holliston, Mass., 1759.

Hopestill Leland, father of John Leland, was son of Henry Leland and Margaret Babcock; born in Sherburn, Mass., 1655; died in Sherburn, Mass., 1729.

Henry Leland, father of Hopestill Leland, was born in England in 1625, died in Sherburn, Mass., 1680.

INTRODUCTION.

In the village of Chester, Vt., and in the very central portion of it, is a burial ground, where head-stones and monuments stand close ranked and silent above the sleeping dead. A low stone wall guards the sacred enclosure from intrusion. The meeting-house and the school-house, on the right hand and on the left, make with the cemetery a sacred trinity, typical of New England. A brook running in the rear breaks the sad silence with its subdued yet cheerful song, and by its constant motion seems to be keeping pace with the flowing years. Among the headstones that mark the older portion of the grounds is one of marked simplicity. It is of white marble which the lichens seem to respect and on which they have gathered only enough to distinguish it from the more modern tablets. Upon it are inscribed these few words.

REVEREND

AARON LELAND

DIED 23 AUG. 1832.

After being pastor of the Baptist Church
in Chester forty-six years.

That inscription is enough to give the memorial stone special interest. How brief and simple! An honored name, a long life, a sacred calling, a lifelong pastorate! How that record reads in contrast with the brevity of most modern pastorates! These years of his service were years in which the State and the Nation grew from infancy to well developed strength, and when the Baptist denomination, filled with mis-

sionary zeal, planted churches in the wilderness and sent its servants far abroad.

We begin to enquire for more knowledge of Elder Leland, and have not far to go before we find his record is worthy of study, his name of honor, and his example of imitation. He was in his day not simply the pastor of a church in a rural community, but one of the foremost Baptists, and one of the most influential and honored citizens of the Green Mountain State, and hence he is worthy of special memorial in the records of The Vermont Baptist Historical Society.

From the lips of a few old men and women, who have lingering pleasant memories of Leland himself, or of incidents concerning him, from the Church-book, minutes of Association and Convention, and the "Records of The Governor and Council," I have gathered facts concerning him. The sources of information have determined the arrangement of material; and in what follows I have endeavored to sketch the life of Aaron Leland in the Church, The Association, The State Convention, The Town, and The State.

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CHAPTER I.

LELAND AND THE CHURCH.

In the winter of 1786 David Johnson of Chester, Vt. was visiting friends in Holliston, Mass. and while there he heard of young Aaron Leland, and from his friends received a very happy impression of him.

Leland was then in the vigor of his young manhood, twenty-five years old. Though not college educated he had availed himself of the full benefit of the common schools, and was a vigorous thinker, and possessed a scholarly mind. He had recently united with the Baptist church in Bellingham, Mass. and had given himself ardently to the ministry, and had been licensed to preach by the Bellingham church. He had marked ability even then as a public speaker, and was regarded as a young man of great promise. He had expressed to some of his friends an inclination to go into the country, if the way opened. Learning this, Mr. Johnson allowed himself to hope that Leland might be persuaded to come to Chester. With this hope he returned home, and talked with his friends about it, with the result that fifteen citizens of Chester, none of them Baptists, signed the following petition, the original of which is in the possession of Mrs. S. F. Brown, of Ludlow, Vt.

Whereas, Mr. David Johnson of this town has lately recommended to us, the subscribers, Mr. Aaron Leland, of Mendon, as a well disposed person and a suitable preacher of the Gospel, and further informs us that Mr. Leland has a desire to move into the country, if he can meet with a suitable situation, we, the subscribers, hereby signify our earnest desire for Mr. Leland to preach with us in this town, and if agreeable to settle here.

We wish Mr. Johnson to inform Mr. Leland of the situation of the town of Chester.

Chester, June 21, 1786.

(Signed)

NEHEMIAH FIELD,
SIMON OLSON,
CHARLES MAN,
JOHN GRAHAM,
NATHANIEL STONE,
JOHN STONE, JR.,
WILLARD MAN,
JOSEPH SMITH,
JOHN SMITH,
DAVID MCCLELLAN,
ABIEL BARNEY,
NATHAN HODGEMAN,
WILLIAM ATWOOD,
JOHN CARGE,
DAVID JOHNSON.

In compliance with the wish of these signers Mr. Johnson wrote the following friendly letter.

MR. LELAND,

Dear Sir.—When I was down to Holliston last winter, I heard that you was become a good preacher, and several persons told me that they thought it likely that you would come up here and preach with us, and I intended to come and see you but could not get time; but I saw your father who told me you talked of coming up to Mr. Curtisses in the fall, and did not know but that you would come here; and I have talked with some people here, and they are very earnest to get you to come up here and preach, as you will know by a petition which I now present to you; and I was present when the petition was drawn. I told them you had a mind to *come up country*, but they misunderstood me and wrote that you had a mind to *move up country*, and we had not time to alter it after I first saw it without losing the opportunity of sending it down. Now sir, if your mind should be to come here, as I hope it will, I expect you will want to know something of the circumstances of the town. The town has been settling better than twenty years, and there is about a hundred families in it, and the petitioners are chiefly in as good way to live as any in the town, and though there is but few signers we expect a considerable large congregation will attend the meetings, for we have but little preaching of any sort in town, and the people's mind seem to be in general for a Baptist preacher. These send by Jason Rice,

who will come back here again the first of August next, and if your mind is to come up with him I should be glad; if not Sir, please to send word whether you will come or not by him; and if you should come desire that you would come first to my house. So no more at present. So I remain,

Your loving friend

DAVID JOHNSON.

Chester, Vt. June 29, 1786.

N. B. If you should come alone Sir, you might want some direction of the way. First, enquire for Keen; then for Walpole; then across the bridge over the Connecticut River; then Chester is the second town.

Influenced by the petition and by the letter of Mr. Johnson, Leland set out on his long journey, and in due time arrived in Chester.

Upon reaching the place the young minister was disappointed. The country was not so well settled, nor the people so interesting as he had expected. He was troubled, perplexed, disheartened. The path of duty was not clear.

There was evidently much for someone to do, but he shrank from attempting it. He looked to the throne for guidance.

There is a tradition that the crisis came in the night. He was planning to return in the morning; but unable to sleep he arose, and went out of doors, and under an apple-tree knelt and prayed earnestly for some token that should reassure him. And while he prayed, the One who cheered the apostle Paul at Corinth seemed to speak to him in the same terms, "I have much people in this city." These words were so deeply impressed upon his mind that he decided upon Chester as his field of work.

He returned to his home for a few months, spent the time in preaching here and there, secured four strong letters of commendation from the churches in Bellingham, * Attleboro, Wrentham, and Grafton, and then returned to Chester to begin his life work.

There was no organized church there to welcome him, and comparatively few christians; but there was an opportunity

*See Appendix.

to work, and souls to save; and the assurance that God had a people there was never forgotten.

He had hardly begun his work before he came under the influence of a great sorrow, of which there is probably no record save in the cemetery.

Within a few feet of Leland's grave is a small black slate stone, with the winged head carved at the top, and the words "Memento Mori" and this inscription.

IN MEMORY OF
JOANNA
WIFE OF REV. AARON LELAND
Who died July 28th, 1787
in her 24th year.

Beneath is this epitaph

With joy she left her native home,
Unmindful of approaching fate:
Three weeks destroyed her youthful bloom,
And left in tears her faithful mate.

The natural solution of the enigma of this epitaph is, that three weeks from the time when Leland and his young wife left Massachusetts for their Vermont home, they were sundered by death. This solution appears to be confirmed by the fact that as late as June 10, 1787 Leland preached in the Baptist church in Grafton, Mass. On the 28th of July he was bereaved.

Mr. Leland afterward married a widow named Eunice Rockwood. She lived only till Oct. 16th, 1799. On her headstone is inscribed

IN MEMORY OF EUNICE
WIFE OF REV'D AARON LELAND
Who died Oct. 16, 1799
in her 41st year.

Whilest over this grave her friends shall weep
Deaf to their cries shall Eunice sleep;
In humble silence, ne'er to rise
Till Jesus comes in eastern skies.

May 28th, 1800, Leland was again married by Jabes Sargent, Justice of the Peace, to Sally Webb. She survived her husband six years and died July 8th, 1838.

In loneliness and sorrow the young preacher began his work among strangers. It was pioneer work. He built upon no other man's foundation. He preached and visited from house to house, and worked with his hands as well as with heart and voice. In two years, Aug. 10, 1789, he had the satisfaction of seeing a little church of ten members recognized by an ecclesiastical council called for that purpose.

With this event in prospect he had bought in May and June of that year a farm of fifty-three and a half acres, and paid 106 pounds for the same. On this he was to spend the rest of his days.

Here he built a substantial brick house, and out-buildings which still stand, and are now occupied by Walter Lockwood.

The growth of the church was not rapid at the first. Each year a few names were added to the list. At the end of five years it numbered fifty members. Five years later it reported 142 members. In 1799 a precious revival began and in four years 186 were added to the church by baptism.

The labors of this apostolic preacher at this time were arduous in the extreme. He scoured the country for miles around, seeking converts, and encouraging christians, and organizing them into churches. Through a forest path he reached Jamaica twenty miles away, and worked with that people and organized a church. The records of the town of Rockingham show that early in his ministry Leland was the recognized shepherd of the Baptists of that town. As early as 1786 and until 1793 or 1794 there was a Baptist church in that town, and during most of the years of its existence, Leland supplied this church. At different times he subscribed himself as "Elder", "Minister at Chester" and "Clerk or Pastor." At

Cavendish, and Andover, and Grafton, and Springfield he visited and worked, and gathered the converts into the Chester church. At Londonderry he preached in a saw-mill. Members from these far distant villages were received as branches of the Chester church and were encouraged with the assurance that, as soon as they had reached a membership of twelve, they might, if they wished, be organized into independent churches. This is a matter of record concerning the Cavendish members, and of natural inference concerning the rest. The time came when this assurance was fulfilled.

On the 31st of Aug., 1803, just fourteen years after the organization of the Chester church, an ecclesiastical council was convened, and with the happiest of feelings four churches were set off from the Chester church to begin their independent life. These were the Baptist churches of Cavendish, North Springfield, Andover, and Grafton. The membership of the parent church was suddenly reduced from 253 to 79.

Was there ever such a record as this? Four churches set off in one day from the mother church!

The Leland method of church propagation is worthy of study. He seems to have followed the course of a skillful vine-grower, who instead of cutting slips from the vine and attempting to root them independently, he rather bends down the branches, while still attached, and covers a part of their stem with soil, and when well rooted cuts them off and lets them live their own independent life; but not until well rooted. If this method had been more generally followed in early days the results would no doubt have been more permanent. Is this process too ancient to be effective now?

Long before this stage in his ministry Leland had made for himself a large place in the hearts of the people. The Congregational church in Chester was organized in 1773, but after having had a part of the services of Rev. Samuel Whiting five years it was without a pastor for thirty-six years, so that Leland was the shepherd of the town's people generally.

Indeed in 1799 the town went so far as to pass a vote in

the March meeting "To give Rev. Aaron Leland an invitation to officiate as minister for the town of Chester," and voted an appropriation of sixty pounds for his support, "the same to be paid before the first of Jan." This vote however stands alone on the records, and was never repeated.

Mr. Leland's public efforts were of a high order. He was in every sense a pulpit orator. Unlike the great apostle his bodily presence was not mean, nor his speech contemptible in the estimation of anyone. His personal presence was imposing, commanding, inspiring. He was a man of large stature, a portly man. It is said that he was so fat he could not get his boots on or off without assistance, yet those who remember him say that he was a man of fine personal appearance. His voice was deep and of wonderful compass and volume; but smooth and flexible and musical. He spoke extemporaneously and with fine command of language. He was a full man, ready for all occasions. In the pulpit he spoke with profound convictions and carried conviction to others. In argument he was powerful and convincing; in exhortation affectionate and persuasive. He was of sensitive emotional nature, and while self controlled, his tones, and sometimes his tears, moved his people to demonstrative feelings. His grasp of the great doctrines of the gospel was firm and he enjoyed unfolding them. The doctrines of divine sovereignty and human depravity, salvation by grace alone, through faith in Jesus Christ, the divine Redeemer, these and kindred truths were realities to him.

He guarded his flock jealously against popular errors. He cheered them to be firm in the faith, and inspired in them an unshaken confidence in the leadership of the Lord, and in the certainty of the spread of his kingdom in all the earth.

Since he preached extemporaneously it is difficult to find anything to illustrate his style of thought and speech. The only samples I have found are in his Circular Letters written to The Woodstock Association, from which I may quote.

"Dear Brethren: Give heed to the things you have heard, 'which

at the first began to be spoken by our Lord and were confirmed by them that heard him,' for the doctrine of Jesus and his disciples is a discriminating doctrine—it draws the golden line between truth and error; the kingdom of Christ and Antichrist; the eternal foundations which God hath laid in Zion and the tottering Babel of self-righteousness, swept with industry and garnished with the plastic hand of self-conceit. The foundation of God is as ancient as eternity, as permanent as his throne, and as perpetual as himself. This glorious foundation is the cause of all our hope and consolation."

Then let the saints rejoice that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, for the foundation standeth sure, and the building is as sure as the rock on which it is built. This stone cut from the mountain without hands must prevail and fill the whole earth; upon these things let our faith be founded, upon the accomplishment of them let our hope be built up, while love to the glorious author of our religion kindles like a gentle flame in our hearts. This system is not dependent upon men, nor even upon angels, but upon the God of angels. This religion will elevate the sorrows of this world, calm the tempestuous sea of human life, disarm death of its sting, and create an unshaken confidence in the eternal God.

Here is a sample of his practical exhortation.

"And do we brethren profess this religion? What evidence do we give the world that we are not of the world, while we are governed by a worldly mind, and are joining in the vain and vulgar? What evidence do we give our families that we fear and serve God while we neglect family worship? Are we church-members? What evidence do we give that we regard our covenant obligations, while a groundless excuse will keep us from church-meetings and from the public worship of God, and attending communion with the brethren?

And again what evidence do we give that we regard the peace of the church, to which we belong, when we spread an evil report concerning our brethren, and are not governed enough by the gospel to take gospel labor with them? And further what evidence do we give that we love the gospel while we neglect them that preach it?

Dear brethren these things are dishonorary to the above mentioned gospel which we profess; therefore suffer a word of exhortation to avoid such things, which are like complicated disorders attending an enfeebled constitution, but let us stand fast in the gospel and reduce the same to practice that we may prove our love to the cause of Christ, not only in word but in deed and in truth."

His words to his own people must have been intensely humane and sympathetic if they were in harmony with his

acts. This incident has come from so many quarters that we cannot well doubt its truthfulness.

While preaching in his high pulpit one Sunday afternoon, he could see through the window behind him that a rain-storm was gathering in the north-west. On the hillside back of the church was a crop of grain, ripe and cut, ready to be gathered in, and sure to be damaged by a rain.

Leland stopped abruptly in the midst of his sermon, called the attention of his brethren to the facts, took off his coat and laid it on the pulpit, and led the men out and worked with them vigorously to save the threatened crop.

In his personal ministry among the families of his flock he was fatherly, cheerful and even mirthful.

As a little sample of his roguishness. Calling one day upon one of his old lady friends he gave her a playful look and said, "I know you smoke." His friend looked puzzled and confused, when he pointed to a little round hole burned in the skirt of her dress. That had betrayed her. It was a fact. She did smoke, as did many women in those days.

Under his cheerful, manly ministry, his church prospered and year by year converts were added, sometimes singly, sometimes in groups until the small membership left after the division increased to 237, nearly its maximum number. He led 496 into the baptismal stream in Chester alone, and buried them in the likeness of their Lord. He welcomed many by letters from other churches and sent out many with his blessing. He was in great demand for funeral services near and far, sometimes travelling as far as twenty miles to minister comfort to the sorrowing, and by all the solemn realities of eternity to urge men to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

He was in equal demand for marriage occasions. 314 marriage certificates are inscribed in the town records of Chester over his name, and how many in other towns we do not know.

It is interesting to note his signatures under these mar-

riage certificates. At first he signed himself, Aaron Leland, minister; later Aaron Leland, Judge; while under his latest certificates were the signature, Aaron Leland, V. D. M., Volento Dei Ministerium.

On one occasion at least he disappointed expectant parties. Mr. E. P. Kingsbury relates that the Elder had one day driven several miles from home, on his way to marry a couple, when he stopped to speak to an acquaintance by the way, who enquired where he was going. Leland told him his errand, and named the persons he was intending to marry. "What," said his friend, "those two going to be married? Why the man does not know enough to take care of himself, and the woman knows less than he does." "Is that the sort of folks they are?" said the Elder, "Then I believe I wont go." He turned his horse about and went home.

On account of his ability as a counsellor, the church was frequently called upon to send its elder and delegates to ecclesiastical councils far and near for ordinations, for the recognition of churches, and for the settlement of difficulties. Thirty-two such invitations are recorded in the church book. One of these was to an ordination council called by the Congregational church of Weathersfield to ordain Mr. Comvers to the gospel ministry.

Jan. 2, 1808. When Deacon Beaman Boynton of North Springfield was called for ordination, Leland was Moderator and no doubt influential in the council. The council refused ordination on account of the unsoundness of the candidates views respecting the state of converted sinners before conversion. A subsequent council was called February, 1809 at which time the examination was satisfactory.

In Nov. 1820 the membership of the North Springfield church was 42. The following spring occurred a revival which added many to the church, more than seventy being baptized. Five of the converts subsequently studied for the ministry. Mr. Ely, pastor was not ordained till July 11, 1821, consequently many were baptized by Elder Leland of Chester. An

event occurred on one baptismal occasion which is worthy of notice. Jan. 24, 1821 Mr. Leland baptized ten candidates in what is now J. M. Aldrich's mill-pond in Weathersfield. As he was leading Barak Upham, one of the ten, down into the water he exclaimed in his impressive way "Brother Barak, this is just like Philip and the Eunuch, going down into the water." Rev. Mr. Newton, pastor of the Cong. church, was standing near, and hearing the remark thought it was an insult, because the Eunuch was a black man. This was when evidence was not so convincing as now that the Africans are our brothers. (Hist. Sketch of the North Springfield Bapeist church.)

The church records contain minutes of another sort which are suggestive of more trying phases of the elders life. In those early days when the watchcare of the churches was more particular, and the discipline of the churches less lax than now, many church meetings were trials in every sense of the word. A pastor had need of much grace and good judgment to conduct these meetings, and to keep the harmony of the church from being fatally disturbed.

The following are some of the causes of discipline during Elder Leland's ministry.

1. Bro. — has neglected to attend upon the worship of God with the church without giving sufficient reason.

2. Bro. — for neglect of public worship on the Lord's day, (2) for letting his children roam from house to house and from field to field on the Lord's day in secular pursuits and vain amusements, (3) for selling two sheep, delivering, and taking the money for the same on the Lord's day; all of which is thought to be hurtful to the christian name.

3. Sister — for going with young people in dancing and other carnal amusements; wishing to be discharged from the church that she might go on in carnal mirth with less remorse, her treating other solemn obligations with great indifference and contempt.

4. Bro. C. complains of Bro. P. member of the church in Westmoreland, a church within our knowledge, on account

of his making two attempts to cast out devils, in which he thinks he was successful, justifying himself in the same.

5. Bro. — has encouraged persons to bring instrumental music into our church worship since he knew the mind of the church thereon.

6. Bro. T. concerning a calf which he sold for veal, which was supposed to have been choked.

Settled in condition that the persons who bought the veal give a statement that they were satisfied.

7. Whereas sister— has appeared to embrace the Universal sentiment, and in her conversation countenanced the same, also brings so unreasonable charges against the Baptist church.

After due course of discipline, voted to give her a letter of exclusion, but not till after our next conference, that she may have still further opportunity of considering the solemnity of being cut off from communion with the church.

Another similar—Sister—I have found that she has embraced the Universal faith to all appearances. She said she had as much reason to believe that all would be saved as that a part would be damned. After that she confessed that the more she heard of the Universal plan the more she was confirmed in it.

Whereas Bro.— has brought unreasonable charges against sister — also appearing to be possessed of a temper of mind not according to the Gospel.

For lascivious conduct and falsehood.

For using profane language and denying the same.

For keeping up a quarrel between themselves, and not living up to the Gospel rule. (Husband and wife.)

Bro. B— for fencing up a highway, endeavoring to divide the church in Andover and injure some of its members, holding by word and deed that church members have a right to go where they please to meeting.

Probably the darkest period of Leland's ministry came in 1824, when a number of the members of the church became disaffected and brought serious charges against their pastor.

Both these charges and the action of the church upon them are a part of Leland's history and help us to know the man.

In a church meeting held the last Wednesday in February, 1824, Elder Leland, "after relating many circumstances which have taken place from the time he first came to this town down to the present day he said that he never, under the present impressions of his heart should attempt to preach again, nor attend a funeral or any other place as a publick speaker.

After the Elder had finished his remarks and retired the church took under consideration the case of absenting members.

Saturday before the first Sabbath in April the church met for conference, at which time the church unanimously agreed that they could fellowship Elder Leland to preach, and chose Brother Thibling and Brother Asa Leland to notify and request him of the same.

Elder Leland requested of the church a letter of their fellowship to him separate from the record.

The church agreeable to his request voted to give the following:

VOTE OF CONFIDENCE.

"Whereas, a number of persons in the town of Chester have secretly conspired together to injure the reputation of Elder Leland, a member of the Baptist Church in said town, in order to prevent his preaching, and to persuade the people from hearing him, and to crush the Baptist Church and to build something different upon its ruins, we therefore the members of said church, having had time to examine and fully investigate the proceedings of the conspiracy against him and the church and also considering the confession that Elder Leland has once and again made do hereby certify that we cordially fellowship him as a christian, and as an able minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

By order and in behalf of the church,

WILLIAM HOWARD, Church Clerk.

The disaffected persons were excluded. Then a Council was called by both parties, a council remarkable for the ability of its constituency.

The records of this Council, are the unimpassioned testimony of worthy cotemporaries concerning Leland, and make up a page of contrasting lights and shades, but which exonerates the Elder from serious charges.

RECORDS OF THE COUNCIL,

CHESTER, VT., FEB. 9, 1825.

By letters missive from the Baptist Church of Christ in Chester, Vert. the following Elders and brethren convened at the Baptist Meeting-house in said Chester on Wednesday the 9th of February, 1825 for the purpose of "hearing the complaints of certain persons who have been excluded from said church, and to act thereon as duty shall require, viz.

From the Bap. Church in Alstead, N. H. Elder Jer. Higbee and Bro. Nath'l Vilas.

From the Bap. Church in Salem, N. Y. Elder Wm. McCuller and Bro. Thos. Stevens.

From the Bap. Ch. in Rockingham & Westminster. Elder Jos. Elliott and Dea. Sam. Mason.

From the Bap. Ch. in Greenwich, N. Y. Elder Edward Barber, and Bro. Jas. Tefft.

From the Bap. Ch. in Windsor E. P. Elder N. W. Williams, and Dea. Dan. Bugbee.

From the Bap. Ch. in Cavendish and Ludlow, Elder Ariel Kendrick and Bro. Asaph Fletcher.

From the Bap. Ch. in Windsor, W. P. Elder, Sam. Lamson, and Dea. Martin Low.

Elder William McCuller was chosen Moderator and Elder N. W. Williams, Scribe.

Elder Barber prayed.

The complaints of the aggrieved persons being called for, two statements were presented, containing thirteen charges against Elder Aaron Leland, which were separately taken into consideration and evidence called for, the parties each making

their several statements and answering to questions proposed. Two of the charges were embraced in the eleven contained in one statement.

After serious and deliberate examination of all the accusations which have been presented, the Council have agreed in the following Results, viz.

(1) Upon the charge that Elder Leland did not fulfill his engagement to the church and to individual brethren, that he would resign all public offices in the State, for a certain compensation, proposed by himself and unanimously acceded to by the church, this Council are of the opinion that Elder Leland has not been guilty of a positive breach of contract, for the reason that the church was tardy in filling the proposed subscription in due season; yet it is also thought by the Council that it was inexpedient for him to accept the office of Lieutenant Governor, inasmuch as he could not, from the nature of the case, doubt its being the design of the church to employ him, and inasmuch as he had a very considerable measure of evidence that said subscription would be filled before the expiration of the current year.

(2) Upon the charge that Elder Leland has discovered a thirst for the honors, offices and emoluments of this world, The Council are of the opinion that he has, in times past, possessed such a thirst; and believing that the ministers of Christ ought to give themselves to the work of the ministry, as far as their circumstances will allow, are also of the opinion that his civil connections and labors have diminished his usefulness in the services of the church.

(3) Upon the charge of "having as a minister of Christ an evil report of them that are without," the Council refer it to the eleventh allegation.

(4) Upon the charge of being "arbitrary and overbearing in the church" the Council are of the opinion, that Elder Leland, from his judicial and civil connections has acquired the habit of sternness and has been less meek and gentle in the pastoral office than is becoming the servant of God.

(5) Upon the charge that "Elder Leland has broken

bread, to members, or has urged them to commune with him, while according to his own declarations and that of others, he viewed them to be his personal enemies:" the Council are of the opinion that it is not supported.

(6) Upon the charge that he has manifested to the brethren and sisters since they withdrew from the church, a spirit unbecoming a minister of Christ," the council are of the opinion that it is well supported; (and considering that all railing and anger are forbidden by the laws of God) were it not that he has publicly and fully confessed this wrong, they would consider him unworthy of christian fellowship.

(7) Upon the charge that "he has unjustly accused a christian brother of slandering him in a public newspaper of Aug. 12th, 1822; and has labored with him in disregard of the gospel rule in the 18th Chap. of Matt.; the council are of the opinion that the first part of this charge is not supported; but they also think that he disregarded the rule of labor above mentioned.

(8) Upon the charge that "he has made an unchristian, false, and cruel attack upon a member of the church in a public news-paper of Aug. 25th, 1823"; the council are of the opinion that for christians, especially christian ministers, to publish invidious pieces under fictitious names is very far from a christian conduct; and they highly regret the language of the piece alluded to.

(9) Upon the charge that "he has laid down principles for the government of others which he has declined to observe himself," the council are of the opinion that it is virtually embraced in the several allegations herein contained.

(10) Upon the charge "that he has stated things publicly which are not true," the council are of the opinion that it is not supported.

(11) Upon the charge that "Elder Leland has, if the reports and statements which have been made are true, deliberately attempted a violation of the seventh commandment," the council are of the opinion that he, being naturally possessed of a light and unguarded mind, has been guilty at some times

of very imprudent expressions and actions, which have given occasion of suspicions and complaints against him; and they do most seriously regret that such has been the case with him, but after duly and solemnly weighing the reports and statements presented against him, they do not perceive that there is evidence that he has been guilty of attempting to violate the seventh commandment.

(12) The council, taking into consideration the proceedings of persons which have been excluded from the church are of the opinion that, inasmuch as their difficulty was principally with the pastor of the church, and that there is evidence that they honestly felt grieved with him in regard to the agreement for support, on the part of the church, and a surrender of offices on the part of the Elder, although the council does not attach the same measure of wrong to him which the excluded members do, yet they think the church was premature in excluding them.

The council also are constrained to say that they have abundant evidence that the excluded members have dishonored in a painful measure the divine Redeemer, and his precious cause by indulging a hard spirit and imprudent communications, and in seeking with the eye of an eagle after errors in Elder Leland, for all which they entreat them to repent and confess with deep humility and contrition.

(13) Finally, the council taking a deliberate and careful view of all these painful trials and divisions, feel bound to say that they believe much of these evils are owing to want of christian love and meekness and holy regard to the cause of Christ in the world; and therefore they earnestly recommend to each and every member and person connected, close self examination, prayer, mutual confession and forgiveness, and "avoid tale bearing which gendereth strife." And further they do in particular advise the excluded members to return and confess their fault to the church; and they advise the church,

on receiving such confessions, to forgive and restore them to their fellowship. *

Chester, Vermont, February, 11, 1825.

WILLIAM McCULLER, Moderator,
N. W. WILLIAMS. Scribe.

This painful crisis past, Leland's ministry continued to move peacefully along toward a triumphant close. Year by year the spiritual interest in the church deepened, animosities were forgotten and brethren offended reconciled. In 1830 a gracious revival began which continued with great power for three years. In 1831, 81 were received into the church by baptism. October and November of that year were memorable months. In October, 36 were baptised, 17 in one day. In November, 34, 14 of these being baptised on the first Lord's day. The church had now attained the membership of 237; nearly the number of its members at the time of the division into five churches in 1803.

As the infirmities of years came to be more serious Leland began to feel the need of a fire in the church. The purchasing of the stove is an incident related by Mr. E. P. Kingsbury. The Elder had found a stove that could be purchased for eighteen dollars, but how to raise that amount of money was not clear. Someone approached Mrs. Kingsbury, (mother of E. P. Kingsbury.) She at first offered to give two dollars to start the subscription. That was not thought to be quite enough. Then she said "Well I have a sheep that has three lambs. They are worth a dollar apiece. You can have the value of the three lambs. With the subscription thus cheerfully started the rest was easily raised and the stove purchased.

This was a large box stove which would take a stick about three feet long, and the pipe was run out of a window, by removing a pane of glass.

It seems that this stove was not large enough to heat the great house in the coldest of weather, and this gave occasion for an incident, which illustrates the elder's wit. One cold

winter day, while he was preaching and the people shivering, several boys and young men got up and went back to the stove. This began to disturb the elder after awhile, and he stopped preaching and said; "I do not expect any more young men will go to the stove unless they have large holes in the heels of their stockings. It is needless to say that he was not further annoyed during that service.

The work incident to the great revival was a severe draught upon Leland's failing energies. Yet he would not spare himself. With all the zeal of his earlier life he threw himself into that grand evangelistic effort that was to be the climax of his ministry. At one of his last baptisms, but a few weeks before his death, the physician, seeing his condition, told him he was more fit to be in bed than administering baptism. He replied resolutely "I will go." After the last candidate had been immersed he lifted his hand and his eyes to heaven and said, "Now Lord lettest thou thy servant depart in peace for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." During the sickness that followed his physician advised giving him a little alcoholic stimulant. In his earlier life he had been addicted to the use of stimulants, never to intoxication, but somewhat freely as most men of his day were. But once convinced of the sin of the practice he cut off the indulgence and became a fervid advocate of total abstinence. And now when the temptation was offered, he met it with heroic strength, "What is that you are saying," he asked. "Don't offer me that, I will not take it." When urged on account of his enfeebled condition he replied, "What matters a few days more or less here I will not take that drink."

His last address to the church is well remembered by one who heard it, G. L. Fletcher, Esq.

Standing in a pew in the front part of the church he began his address to his people, evidently knowing that it was to be his last. His whole soul was burning with love for Christ and for his people, and with wonderful power he expressed himself. His wife, knowing how feeble he was, and fearing the effect of such intense mental excitement and ex-

ertion, gently pulled his coat and cautioned him not to say much more, but spare himself. Turning to her he said loud enough to be heard by all. "Woman, what does it matter about this body, I must give my dying message to this people, whom I have so long loved." He then resumed his appeal, as if nothing had happened, and completed what he had to say. It was his dying message and was long remembered. There are probably few more thrilling incidents in the history of many of our churches than that final address of Elder Leland to his loved and long served people.

CHAPTER II.

IN THE ASSOCIATION AND CONVENTION.

In the Woodstock Association Leland was an acknowledged and loved leader. In twenty-six sessions he was the moderator. These were in three periods of eight successive years each, and two at intervals. His ability as a presiding officer was thus clearly recognized. Six sessions he was the preacher of the annual sermon, and on other occasions he delivered the closing address. He was the author of three Circular letters and one Corresponding letter. Almost every year he represented the association at other corresponding associations. Each year he took his part with other ministers of the association in supplying the destitute churches within its borders. When the orthodoxy of some of the ministers of the Woodstock association was questioned by the Vermont Association, 1812, Leland and Ambrose were appointed to make investigation and report. He was appointed in 1814 first on a committee to form a constitution for an Education Society and to print a circular letter for the churches. He was appointed President of the Board of the Union Missionary Society of Vermont and New Hampshire, auxiliary to the Missionary Union.

In 1823 he was appointed delegate to Montpelier, to consider the propriety of forming a Baptist State Convention.

In 1830 the Minutes contain this resolution:

"On motion of Brother Aaron Leland, accompanied by an impassioned address, Resolved "That this association highly approves the efforts which are made for the suppression of intemperance and earnestly recommend to every professor of religion to use his influence for the promotion of the object of

total abstinence from the destructive poison, and by connecting themselves with temperance societies.

The Association minutes of 1806 contain a record which illustrates the prominence of Leland, even at that time and the disquiet caused by his activity in civil affairs. It shows too the confidence in which he was held by the brethren most closely associated with him.

The record is this. "Voted to insert in the minutes the complaint exhibited in the minutes of the Vermont Association against Elder Aaron Leland, and the doings of the Association thereon. "Considering the circumstance of Elder Aaron Leland accepting and holding such a number of offices in the civil department, which we consider very inconsistent with his office as a gospel minister, and which is a grief to us; we earnestly recommend to the Woodstock Association to take the matter into their consideration, and take such measures as their wisdom shall dictate, which may do honor to the cause of the Redeemer, and relieve us from our grief." (Minutes of the Vermont Association.)

Having taken the above complaint into serious consideration, we are of the opinion that the complainants, not having produced any evidence that they have taken previous labor with Elder Leland that the gospel requires we cannot legally receive the complaint."

Imagination loves to picture the scenes of those far away associations when this strong man was the leader of his brethren. We wish we could hear his impassioned addresses and feel the influence of his personal presence. One or two incidents in lighter vein are preserved.

The father of Dr. Hovey, was very intimate with Mr. Leland and thought a great deal of him. He named one of his sons Aaron Leland Hovey. Dr. Hovey heard much about Leland, and among the incidents he remembers and related to was this. The Convention or association met at Mount Holly and the attendance was large and the accommodations of the people limited, so quite a number were obliged to lodge in the meeting-house. They made themselves as comfortable as they

could in the pews. Elder Leland was very fleshy and snored loudly. One nervous minister, unable to sleep on account of Leland's snoring bore his trial as long as he could, and then standing up full length in the pew he called out "Elder Leland, Elder Leland, The glory of your nostrils is terrible."

Another amusing incident is told by Abram Dodge. It occurred in the home of Mr. Dodge's grandmother. She was of Indian descent, peculiar in her appearance, and besides she was at that time demented. Elder Leland had come to preach in the neighborhood, Claremont, on the morrow, and the night being cold and damp he was given a room with a fireplace in it. It was the room which the old lady usually occupied, and the family did not take the proper precautions to make it impossible for her to go to the room in the night. The elder was soundly sleeping when the old lady came into the room, and suspecting something was out of the usual order, went to the fire-place and took a torch from it, and approaching the bed, bent over the face of the Elder, meanwhile waving the torch to make it give as much light as possible. The elder woke suddenly, saw the dreadful face above him and the firebrand waving back and forth, and in genuine terror he gave a mighty yell, that sent the old lady with her firebrand flying with equal fear into the darkness of the hall way, leaving the elder time to meditate upon the strange apparition that had appeared to him, and to convince himself that it was altogether human and of this upper world.

Leland was one of the committee of eleven who met at Montpelier in Oct. 1823, to consider the propriety of forming a Convention of the Baptist denomination in the state of Vermont. He was there, however, as a vigorous opposer of the enterprise. "With the most determined energy he fought the proposed formation of the State Convention, believing or fearing it might be the first step toward a consolidation that would jeopardize the independence of the churches. After the vote was taken, resulting in a strong majority against him, he arose and said in a good natured and humorous way, all his own, "And now my brethren, I suppose you think you have got rid of the

troublesome old man ; but if so, you are much mistaken. I can never be separated from my brethren, and if you are determined to launch this ship, I shall jump abroad and ride; and I warn you now that if you do attempt to interfere with the independence of the churches, you will hear my voice in protest. (Deacon Truman Galusha, see Convention Minutes, 1875, page 116.)

At the organization of The Convention, Leland was chosen its Vice President. He was moderator of its third and fourth sessions. In 1827 he delivered the concluding discourse on Numbers 14: 21. "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord."

In 1830 when the Vermont Branch of the Northern Education Society was formed, he was chosen Vice President. He was active and influential in the Board of the convention, constant in attendance and taking active part in all its business. For five years he was President of the Board.

CHAPTER III.

THE CHRISTIAN CITIZEN.

Elder Leland's activities were not limited to purely ministerial duties. Being dependent largely upon his own efforts for his support rather than on a stated salary, he entered into business pursuits to some extent. He managed his farm successfully, bought and sold house-lots and other property, and accepted various civil offices which yielded some revenue.

His standing in the town and his interest in town matter may be judged from the fact that he served ten years as Selectman, twenty-six years as Town Clerk, and twenty years as Town Treasurer.

He was justice of the Peace and in 1810 he took the oath as Judge of Windsor County Court, which office he held eighteen years.

Nine years he represented his town in the General Assembly (1801,—2,—3,—4,—5,—6,—8,—9,—13.)

During three of these years he was Speaker of The House.

Four years he was on the Governor's Council, (1818—19—20—21.)

Five years he was Lieutenant Governor, (1822,—23,—24,—25,—26.)

On this last term he was associated with Elder Ezra Butler. Two Baptist clergymen holding the positions of highest honor and responsibility in the State! And they were worthy of the positions.

In 1828 he was nominated for Governor, but declined the honor, that he might give his time to the duties of his ministerial calling. A glance at the records of the doings of the Governor and his Council during the time of Leland's services shows that he was not there simply as an honor. He did his

share of the work. He was present with rarely a single exception at all the sessions. His vote is recorded for or against a great number of prisoner's application for pardon, sometimes in the majority, sometimes with the minority, sometimes the Governor voted one way and the Elder the other. On one instance, when he was in the minority, he secured the condition that the applicant for pardon should leave the state within twenty days and not return for twenty years. At one session six applicants were denied on the motion of Aaron Leland. He took his place on the various committees into which the Council was divided. Committee on New Trials, (1818) Committee on Manufactures, (1819) Committee on Agriculture, (1820) Committee on Turn-pikes, (1821), (1822), Committee on Claims(1823, 24.) In 1820 he was appointed with two others to make an appraisal of the movable property of the State's Prison, and make report. The same year he proposed an amendment to a bill entitled an act in alteration and amendment of an act entitled an act constituting the Supreme Court of Judicature, and County Courts, defining their powers and regulating judicial proceedings. His amendment strongly opposed by Mr. Olin but finally adopted.

In 1821 he was appointed by the Council on Committee to consider the resolution of the Legislature of New Hampshire and Illinois on the subject of proposed amendments to the Constitution of the United States.

He was on Committee regulating appeals from Justices of the Peace.

In 1821, an act for electing Representatives to Congress of the United States was by motion of Leland reconsidered and referred to him and one other member. In 1826 he was appointed by the house as one of the commissioners to superintend the expenditure of money appropriated for the education of the deaf and dumb.

In 1821 he was on the committee to which was referred the part of the Governor's speech as related to the division of the state into districts for the election of Representatives to Congress.

The time spent in the Council was usually 37 days, sometimes a day or two less, and one year but 30. None of the members of the Council were more punctual and constant than he. His compensation was \$148 per year.

These various appointments give some idea of the versatility of his abilities and the confidence reposed in his judgment upon important matters by his associates.

As if all these offices and activities were not enough he was an active and conspicuous Mason.

His name was on the petition praying for a lodge to be established in Chester by the name of The Olive Branch Lodge, and he was soon Master of it.

At a meeting of the Grand Lodge, the following year on October 15, 1802 at Burlington, Leland was appointed next to the Grand Master himself, being elected as Right Worshipful Deputy Grand Master.

In 1804 he was Master at home and attended the Grand Lodge at Middlebury, January 18. At the annual meeting of the Grand Lodge held that year at Rutland, October 9, Aaron Leland was reelected Deputy Grand Master. It was at this session of the Grand Lodge that the district system was adopted and Brother Leland's duties as Deputy Grand Master were "at least once in each year to visit and instruct in the mysteries of Masonry all the Lodges in his district; to install new Lodges if necessary, and make report of the several Lodges in his district to this Grand Lodge at their annual Grand Communication."

His district was one of the largest in the state, if not the largest, as it included all the towns in Windsor County.

The following year he gave up his offices in the Grand Lodge, though he attended the meetings of the Grand Lodge as proxy for the officers of the Olive Branch Lodge No. 11 in 1807.

In 1813 Aaron Leland was Chaplain of the second regiment of Vermont Militia.

Leland was deeply interested in educational interests. He was one of the Incorporators of Middlebury College, and during the rest of his life a member of the Board of Fellows. He

received from that college the honorary degree of Master of Arts; and as an evidence that his reputation and influence was not limited to his own state, Brown University conferred upon him the same honorary degree of Master of Arts, in 1815.

The name Leland in the title Leland and Gray Seminary, the institution at Townshend, is in honor of Aaron Leland, "and the use of his name in this manner was a fitting tribute to the memory of one, who had stood high in the councils of his own denomination, and had filled a large place in the hearts of the people."

No man could have performed the labors and exerted the influence of Elder Leland, who had not a strong physical constitution and a cheerful temperament. He had both. In the pulpit it manifested itself in fervid eloquence, with now and then a spark of wit. In social gatherings and family festivities it overflowed in mirthfulness and healthy activity. He was fond of company and was a genial companion. Sometimes to his more staid neighbors and friends he seemed to carry his merriment beyond the bounds of ministerial propriety.

The mirthfulness of Elder Leland was all the more conspicuous by its contrast with the extreme gravity of Elder Burnap, the pastor of the Congregational Church during the last part of Leland's ministry. Elder Burnap used to say of himself and Leland, "It is no credit to me to be grave and sober, for that is my nature, and as for Elder Leland it is just as natural for him to be full of jokes as it is for him to breathe."

Rev. Joseph Freeman is authority for this incident. After the death of his wife, Elder Leland had his mind fixed upon a certain woman whom he wished to marry. Before doing so he called together his deacons and some of the leading men of his congregation and asked their advice. They unanimously opposed the plan, saying that she was not such a woman as he ought to have etc. When they had expressed themselves freely the elder said, "Well brethren I have heard what you have to say, but I shall marry her and I shall never be jealous of any of you."

Leland had no patience with stupidity and affectation in

others. A young collegian on his way from Hanover to Manchester thought it would be fine to have a call on the Governor, so he knocked at his door and was invited in by the elder himself. He was perhaps a little overawed and embarrassed and failed to give his host any idea of the motive for his visit. He was so uncommunicative that the elder began to question whether his stylish visitor was quite bright, and at length he broke an awkward silence, during which he had been sizing the fellow up, with the blunt question, "Young man what do you wear those glasses for?" O, said he because my eyes are a little weak." More like your head is a little weak," said the elder.

That was rather severe, but it served the purpose of abbreviating the young man's call on the Governor.

Leland found time for recreation. He was fond of hunting, and always kept several good dogs for the chase, and as he had opportunity, he roamed the hills about his home hunting successfully foxes and other wild game, returning flushed with the full tide of buoyant life.

The baying of the hounds upon the track of some game was melody in his ears. One day as he was walking along the village street, he heard some hounds baying in the woods not far away, and meeting a neighbor he greeted him with the words, "Hear that heavenly music." His less appreciative neighbor turned his head this way and that way and then said, "I can't hear any music, those blamed dogs make so much noise."

The mention of his dogs will always recall to those familiar with his history an incident that has been for sometime in print. One Saturday evening a young man, entirely penniless, called at Mr. Leland's house, and asked for supper and lodging. It being inconvenient, for some reason to accommodate him, he sent him to one of his neighbors, Hugh Henry, assuring him that *he* would take good care of him; "though" said he, "he will refuse you at first; but you must stick to him, and you will certainly succeed." The young man called agreeably to directions, and was refused. "I was told," said he, "that you would refuse to keep me unless I stuck to you; and that I am resolved to do." "Who told you that?" said Mr. Henry. "A large man," answered he, "living over there," pointing to the

house from which he had just come. "Well," said Henry, "If parson Leland sent you here, you must stay, I suppose; and what would you like for your supper?" "O, anything that is convenient, for I have no money to pay for it." "But what would you choose if you had money?" "Well to be honest, I should like a good warm supper, if I had the means to pay for it; for I have taken but little food today." A warm supper was accordingly provided, to which the young man paid his best respects; nor was he allowed to leave the next morning till he had done justice to a good breakfast. The young fellow was going to try his fortune in the western wilderness. He had a small dog with him; and just before he was ready to start,—it being near meeting time,—Mr. Henry suggested to his guest that his dog was not a proper one to go into the wilderness with, and that he had a neighbor who had a large dog which would make great havoc among the wild animals in the woods, and which he ought by all means to secure. "He would like," said he, "to exchange him for a small one; but he will probably refuse at first, and perhaps rudely tell you to go about your business, and that he doesn't swap dogs on Sunday, and the like; but if you stick to him you will get the dog."

The young man called at the parson's house, just as he was starting for meeting, and informed him that he had come to swap dogs. And the the answer he received was almost literal fulfilment of Mr. Henry's prediction. "Well I was told" said the fellow, "that you would make such excuses; but I was also told that if I stuck to you, I should get your dog; and that sir you may rest assured I shall do"; and he actually accompanied the parson till he got to the door of the meeting-house. As it was now evident that he was determined to make good his word, there seemed to be no alternative for Mr. Leland but to yield to his importunity, or to go into the house of worship disputing about a dog; and he finally, as the only way of making his escape, said to him, "Go take the dog, and be off in a hurry, and never trouble me again in this way." Mr. Henry outlived Mr. Leland a few years, but they are both buried in the same cemetery, and their graves are not far from each other.

CONCLUSION.

We have endeavored to trace the steps of Elder Leland through various phases of his walk in life. From the material collected and presented we can each form some estimate of this remarkable man. He was a man of no ordinary proportions. He was one of those broad natures in which things apparently opposite exist in harmony. He was portly, and must have been subject to the passions natural to one of full flesh, and yet he was pure and self controlled and temperate. Living at a time when the indulgence in strong drink somewhat freely was not regarded as a blemish on a man's character, he discovered, before many others had, the sin of the practice, and resolutely forsook it, and advocated earnestly total abstinence. We are told that this renunciation of all alcoholic drinks was attended by marked change in his personal appearance, the loss of his ruddy complexion and other evidences of indulgence in the poisonous cup. We are sure that his decision was a long step in the development of his manhood.

His mental and spiritual capacities were on the same scale as his physical, and his higher nature controlled the lower. He could be severely stern or affectionately winning as occasion seemed to him to require. He was a tremendous worker, and yet gave himself time for recreation. He was a pastor of almost patriarchal stamp, and yet so thoughtful, and courteous, and interested in the welfare of the people, that he was widely popular. He was uneducated in the full sense, yet he had all scholarly instincts, and a well developed mind, a student of the Bible, profoundly versed in its doctrines and able to commend them to his fellows. He was a reader of men more than of books, and for that reason able to reach them with the truth. He was the pastor of a country church, yet with all the influence of a metropolitan preacher. While not

free from frailties, nor beyond the reach of just criticism at times, he was conscious of his weakness, and when overtaken in a fault he was ready to confess and forsake it. He is one of a few men who have held lifelong pastorates, organizing a church which he, under God, had gathered and living to see it fruitful of churches as well as of converts, and so well rooted that it has stood the storms of more than a century.

It is not often that a clergyman enters so actively into the civil and political life of the community and the state. We wonder how he could do it and not neglect his special ministerial duties, and not lose something of his spirituality. Probably there are few men who could do as he did. It is evident, that in the opinion of some of his contemporaries, his spirituality and his ministerial work did suffer loss, on account of his activity in civil affairs.

The formal complaint of the Vermont Association to the Woodstock Association, to which we have referred; the complaint of a portion of his own church in 1824; the findings of the very judicious Council, to which this complaint was referred, imply that there may have been ground for some just criticism on this score.

Benedict, in his history, says of Leland, "He was at one time so loaded with civil offices and civil honors, that many of his friends were concerned for his religious and ministerial character. And indeed he at length became concerned for himself, and not without cause. Although he had been able to maintain an unspotted character in the midst of all his worldly elevation, yet he found such want of religious enjoyment, and such a defection in zeal and success of the ministry, that he, a few years ago, gave up all his civil employment, except that of officiating on the bench, which occupied his attention but a few weeks in the course of the year; and he is now once more very affectionately engaged in that most honorable and most despised employment of any man, the christian ministry."

After this was written Leland returned to the civil life, as if unable to keep out of it, and for reasons suggested in the first article of the findings of The Council.

Giving full weight to all this somewhat detracting testimony, it is worthy of note that, while a neighboring Association brought charges against him, his own Association was not equally sensitive; the portion of his own church that accused him and brought him to the trial of a Council, were declared by that same Council to have been members "who have in a painful measure dishonored the divine Redeemer and his precious cause by indulging in a hard spirit, and imprudent communications, and in seeking with the eye of an eagle after errors in Elder Leland."

His own towns people respected and honored him in a high degree; his church as a whole were loyal to him, and loved him; and under his ministry the church was vigorous and growing, and his frequent reelections to important offices, we may well believe, were not so much due to his thirst for the honors and emoluments of office, as to the public recognition of his ability, and his fidelity to the interests of the community and State.

The close of his life was ideally peaceful and triumphant. Having freed himself from all the fetters and distractions of civil affairs, having declined the highest honor that the State could offer him, and which if accepted would have seemed a fitting climax to his life as a christian citizen, he gave himself to prayer and to the ministry of the word. The Spirit was poured out upon him and his people in gracious measure. With a united and revived church attendant in his ministry he preached with power, and converts were multiplied. He entered with self-consuming zeal into the blessed ministry of leading enquirers into the light, and baptising converts on profession of their faith. The desires of his heart were gratified, and his own spiritual nature ripened rapidly. He who had been so strong, so helpful grew weak and dependent on others for assistance; but as the outward man failed the inward man was renewed, and with unfaltering faith and joyous anticipations he fell asleep.

Many sincerely mourned his departure, and bore witness to his worth. "The Watchman" under date of September 7, 1832 published the following obituary.

DIED IN CHESTER, VERMONT, AUGUST, 23.

Rev. Aaron Leland, pastor of the Baptist church in that town aged 71. He was forty-six years pastor of this church and at the time of his decease, President of the Baptist Convention of the State of Vermont. He was an eminently useful minister of Christ, and his public labors were greatly succeeded. In the last year of his life he had the high satisfaction of baptizing 91 hopeful converts to the faith of the gospel. He was greatly esteemed as a valuable citizen, and was repeatedly chosen to the second civil office in his state.

The station, however, in which he shone with the highest lustre was that of a minister of the New Testament. The clearness with which he published the messages of heavenly mercy,—the fearlessness with which he delivered its most humbling truths, vindicating divine sovereignty and discriminating grace,—commended him to the consciences of his hearers in the sight of God. We have witnessed his pulpit performances and the affectionate zeal and unction with which he labored to commend the gospel to the acceptance of men. We rejoice to learn that his sun set without a cloud, to obscure the prospect of glory, and that he was specially sustained in the last hours of dissolving nature.

The Woodstock Association in 1832, shortly after Leland's death passed the following.

"Resolved that the faithful services and untiring perseverance of our lamented father Aaron Leland, long an efficient member of this body, will long be had in grateful remembrance; that the decease of such a man is a public calamity, and that special prayer be now offered, that the Lord would graciously sanctify this bereaving providence to the afflicted family, to the church and congregation deprived of his pastoral labors, and to his surviving brethren in the ministry."

The Board of The State Convention that year closed its report with the following tribute to Elder Leland. (Hadley Proctor was the Corresponding Secretary who penned the report.)

“You will not expect us to close our report without paying a tribute of respect to the memory of the venerable father, who for the past five years, with no ordinary diligence and patience has presided over the deliberations of your board, and taken a very active part in all the business of the Convention. Prompt in his attendance upon all the meetings of the Board and of the Convention; ever ready to unite with the friends of Zion in all measures to advance her interests, we feel that we may be allowed to imitate the conduct of the ancient Israelites, who mourned when they saw that Aaron was dead. We would cherish a fond remembrance of his worth and virtues, and desire that his mantle may fall upon some of our youthful ministers, who shall arise, that they may fill with honor and usefulness the responsible offices of the Convention.”

APPENDIX.

COPIES OF LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION OF ELDER LELAND
FROM ORIGINALS IN THE HANDS OF MRS. S. F. BROWN,
LUDLOW, VT.

BELLINGHAM, September 2, 1786.

THE BAPTIST CHURCH OF CHRIST IN BELLINGHAM,

To all Christian Brethren and Friends,

Greeting: These are to certify that our brother Aaron Leland is a member in good standing with us, and we look upon him to be called of God to preach the Gospel of Christ, and he hath hitherto preached the Gospel and doth preach in a clear manner, and we heartily own him as a Gospel preacher, and we commend him as such to all the churches with which we are in fellowship, and to all others that are disposed to improve him as a preacher of the Gospel, and wish him prosperity in the work of the ministry, praying the God of all grace to bless his labors for the good of many souls.

NOAH ALDEN, Pastor, and in behalf of the church.

LORD'S DAY, APRIL 22, 1787.

We, the Baptist Church in Attleboro, having this day had the opportunity of hearing Brother Aaron Leland improve his gift among us, we have obtained a satisfaction that he is called of God to preach the Gospel of Christ and do heartily join with our sister church in Bellingham in recommending him as above.

Signed by order of and in behalf of the church.

JOB SEAMANS, Pastor.

LORD'S DAY, MAY 20, 1787.

We, the Baptist Church in Wrentham, having this day had the opportunity of hearing Aaron Leland improve his gift among us, have obtained a satisfaction that he is called of God to preach the Gospel of Christ; and do heartily join with our sister churches in Attleboro and Bellingham in recommending him as above.

Signed by order of and in behalf of the church.

EBENEZER GUILD,
JOSEPH MILLER.

GRAFTON, JUNE 10, 1787.

This day the Baptist Church of Grafton had the privilege of hearing Bro. Aaron Leland improve his gift, and are entirely satisfied that God hath called him to preach the everlasting Gospel, and pray that the God of all grace may ever be with him and bless his labors wherever he may be called to publish the same, and heartily join with the aforesaid churches in fellowshiping him in the great work of the ministry.

Signed for and in behalf of the church.

ELKANAH INGALLS.

CIRCULAR LETTER PREPARED BY ELDER LELAND,
FOR THE WOODSTOCK ASS'N.

1791.

Beloved Brethren: Steadfastness in doctrinal, experimental, and practical religion, serves the noble purpose of strengthening the union of christians of every capacity.

Hence the great apostle Paul, with Silvanus and Timotheus, who concur with him, in his epistle to the new created church in Thessalonica, lay great stress upon the steadfastness of their brethren; that it was a means of great comfort to them in their afflictions, and filled them with fresh vigor for the faith of the gospel.

Therefore in the epistle this is written, "For now we live if you stand fast in the Lord." I Thess. 3: 8.

Permit us therefore, dear brethren, to address you at the close of this agreeable anniversary interview, upon the premised subject. It is very evident that the Lord Jesus Christ, in the character of Mediator, is the only medium through which the mind and will of God is communicated to men. If we attend the prophets, at the end of a connected chain of prophecy, Jesus appears. If to the priests and their offerings, under the Mosaic economy, the glory of Aaron's pontifical robe fades away in the superseding glory of Jesus. The smoking altars direct us to Christ, and the sweetness of their incense is lost in the unspotted sacrifice offered by him to God. If to the apostles, they confess themselves dependent on him for their knowledge of things pertaining to his kingdom; and the apostle Paul, is possessed with such a sense of the dignity of his person, that he exhorts his brethren not to follow him any farther than he followed Christ.

Hence dear brethren, while a flood of error is bursting forth in colors too numerous here to name, and men of corrupt minds are perverting the right way of the Lord, to whom else shall we go but unto Jesus, in whom it has pleased the Father all fullness should dwell? and in order to have a stronghold, that we are not deluged in our minds by the flood, and swept away from the faith of the gospel, it is highly necessary that we adhere to and follow after him who is the foundation of God which standeth sure. And to stand fast in the Lord is to stand fast in his testimonies.

And now brethren, let us pray that the Holy Spirit may direct our minds while we search our Bibles, and our hearts will burn with love to the truth as it is in Jesus. Shall we not find ourselves thoroughly furnished to every good work? A shining lamp for our feet, the sword of the Spirit for our defense.

We may stand fast in the doctrine of God's sovereignty—that the spring of action is in himself, and the ultimate end his own glory—that he is not dependent on the happiness of others for his own; that his law is perfectly equal, and that the

blame falls only on the rebel, since the law requires the exercise of no faculty for the glory of the lawgiver, but what the subject is possessed of; which idea must greatly augment the offenders crime.

Secondly, in the total depravity of men, which consists in hating and fleeing from the truth and light.

Thirdly, in the doctrine of Grace, which is the origin of the gospel plan, which in its consistent operation adds lustre to the rectitude and right of divine government—points out the sinners crime—makes an atonement and perpetual reconciliation to God—exercises divine power upon the sinner's conscience in convicting of sin—administers a sealed pardon—promises eternal life—a glorious resurrection—and a translation from sorrow to the realms of uninterrupted joy. In these things we may stand, and have the word of the Lord as an impregnable wall for our defence against the spirit of anti-christ.

Let us consider the dignity of the religion we profess—the cloud of witnesses in its favor—the great and precious promises it contains—and that its basis is the eternal Trinity, and the Holy Spirit witnesses to our interest therein. Surely these things will excite us to walk worthy of the holy vocation wherewith we are called. And do we brethren profess this religion? What evidence do we give the world that we are not of the world, while we are governed by a worldly mind, and are joining the vain and vulgar? What evidence do we give to our families that we fear and serve God, while we neglect family worship? Are we church members? What evidence do we give that we regard our covenant obligations, while a groundless excuse will keep us from church meetings, yea from the public worship of God, and attending communion with the brethren? And again what evidence do we give that we regard the peace of the church to which we belong when we spread an evil report concerning our brethren, and are not governed enough by the gospel to take gospel labor with them? And further, What evidence do we give that we love the gospel while we neglect them that preach it? Dear brethren, these things are dishonorary to the above mentioned religion which we profess: There-

fore suffer a word of exhortation to avoid such things, which are like complicated disorders attending an enfeebled constitution, but let us stand fast in the gospel and reduce the same to practice that we may prove our love to the cause of Christ, not only in word, but in deed and in truth.

Let us attend closely to the discipline of Christ's house that everything may be cut off that ought to die, and everything that ought to live may be saved alive. This will strengthen the hands of Christ's ministers and encourage the hearts of all his saints; and when young converts come to look within the gate for a home, they will rejoice that the temple of the Lord is purged.

Now to Him who is able to keep you from falling be glory, majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever, Amen.

CIRCULAR LETTER PREPARED BY
ELDER AARON LELAND.
1799.

TO THE SAINTS AND BRETHREN SCATTERED ABROAD.

Beloved in the Lord, That the religion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is begun and carried on in the hearts of the children of men by his own power and Spirit, we are happy in believing. And we as fully believe he hath appointed ordinary means to be carefully attended to by his professing people, who, in so doing, may joyfully hope for the blessing of their God therein. To go no further back than two years past, and behold what a cloud of witnesses have arisen in many parts of our land, in favor of the christian religion; and may we not say, with the greatest propriety, that the reformation began first in these churches?

Old professors have been roused from their beds of sloth and worldly conformity, ministers who slept with others, and entertained an undue fondness for metaphysical distinctions in controverted points, that are not necessary for the salvation of the immortal souls of the children of men!

Where a reformation has begun, the change is very apparent, both ministers and people have been made sensible of the great loss of time they have sustained; and have been humbled before God, and brought to the necessity of lamenting their barrenness and constrained to confess to God, to one another, and to sinners hardened through their folly, that much neglected duty of prayer has been attended to, ministers have preached the gospel of Christ, with that solemnity as though their sermons were the last before giving an account of their stewardship. Saints, by solemn prayer and practical exhortations have endeavored to stay up their hands. The God of Israel then heard and came down in many places, and an awful solemnity overspread the assemblies of His people. Sinners were wounded, and blest be his name—they have been healed by his mercy. And now brethren, let us beware lest we fall into a lukewarm state. Hear what our Saviour saith, "If ye love me keep my commandments." Hence if upon due examination we find an ardent desire, that the reformation might still prevail in our land, let us remember it must begin in our own hearts and deportment first. Do we long for the sound of an abundance of the rain of God's Holy Spirit? Let us bestir ourselves to those duties and ordinary means that God hath appointed to be attended to; that we may be workers together with Him. "Bring ye all the tithes into the store-house; that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open to you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room to receive it."

Beloved, let us move off the ground of sloth and worldly conformity. Be exhorted to be much in prayer and watchfulness; be not baffled; be not discouraged. The God of Israel is not sleeping, talking, journeying nor pursuing." Much, yea, very much is depending on a close attention to these duties in regard to the increase of religion in our own hearts, and in a more general sense in our churches. Be afraid of a vain floating mind and an unguarded tongue; but rather fear God all the day long. Be faithful in your families, neighborhoods,

towns, and in the church of God. There is no want of encouragement in obeying the Lord, you have his word and Spirit to guide you, his love to animate you, a glorious hope to support you, and before you there is a crown of righteousness.

LELAND, CIRCULAR LETTER FOR THE
WOODSTOCK ASS'N.

1809.

NEW LONDON.

Brethren Beloved. Through the tender mercies of our God, we dwell in our own land and among our own people and under the operation of laws of our own making, which pretend not to direct us how nor where we shall worship our divine Lord; but wisely protect us from the rage of men, that we in distinction from our forefathers are permitted to sit quietly under our own vine and fig tree, and there is none to fill us with fear. Persecution for conscience's sake is scarcely known in our happy land. But beware, for error is overspreading us like a mighty flood, and many of the dear disciples of Jesus are carried away for awhile in its deadly stream. It appears in disguise and calls itself by the plausible name of truth, clad with the enchanting garments of human reason; it oftener than any otherwise makes its appearance in the earthquake, the whirlwind and the fire—arrogates to itself the right and the power of having formed its own character, of which it boasts much of being very religious and unequaled in zeal—it throws darkness upon the minds of men already dark, it incorporates life and death, flesh and spirit, and blends the kingdom of darkness with the kingdom of our divine Emanuel; and it appears by this system that the children of men, at certain times, are neither dead nor alive, nor belong to one kingdom or the other. This self created system has many votaries and confident disciples, who, like masters over sloth, vow to persevere, unpleasant task, while their religion is the slave of their enthusiastic zeal, founded upon the unstable foundation of human exertion;

no wonder then at this ebbing and flowing spirit, for man is unstable as water.

But, dear brethren, give heed to the things you have heard, "Which at the first began to be spoken by our Lord, and were confirmed by them that heard him," for the doctrine of Jesus and his disciples is a discriminating doctrine—it draws the golden line between truth and error; the kingdom of Christ and AntiChrist; the eternal foundation which God hath laid in Zion, and the tottering Babel of self righteousness swept with industry and garnished with the plastic hand of self-conceit. The foundation of God is as ancient as eternity, as permanent as his throne, and as perpetual as himself. This glorious foundation is the cause of all our hope and consolation.

This is a living stone on which the church of Christ is built, and blessed be the great master builder, for there is an evident likeness between the foundation and the material, for they are living also. "Mark the building well," for there is not a dead material in the whole edifice, the living foundation, the glorious Saviour, who has life in himself, diffuses life through every part of the house of God. This, beloved brethren, is God's own work, this astonishes angels, this confounds devils; this is the Lord's doings and it is marvelous in our eyes.

When the Lord and King of Zion works, the blind see, the deaf hear, the poor leprous sinner is cleansed, the lame leap like an hart, the dead are raised to newness of life, and the poor captive sings at the loss of his chains, and angels join the rapturous song.

Therefore be not afraid though we live in a dark and trying day, in which all the nations in the earth are agitated like the waters of the mighty deep, and the footstool of God is stained with blood of millions, and at the same time the heavens shake, also churches break in pieces, and religious societies are torn asunder. Zion's King sits undisturbed upon his peaceful throne, carrying on the work of sovereign grace, bringing order out of confusion, and hastening on the happy

day when the venerable Jews, with their silvered locks, even down to the skirts of their garments, with deep repentance in their hearts and tears of grief bedewing their faces, shall confess that Jesus is the son of God; glorious day to the Gentile nations of the earth. Haughty kings shall become humble suppliants and willing subjects of our divine Emanuel, with their riches and crowns at his feet.

Then let the saints rejoice that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, for the foundation standeth sure and the building is as sure as the rock on which it is built. This stone from the mountain without hands must prevail and fill the whole earth; upon these things let our faith be founded, upon the accomplishment of them let our hope be built up, while love to the glorious author of our religion enkindles like a gentle flame in our hearts? This system is not dependent upon men, nor even upon angels but the God of angels.

This religion will alleviate the sorrows of this world, calm the tempestuous sea of human life, disarm death of its sting, and create an unshaken confidence in the eternal God.

Be exhorted therefore to wait upon the Lord with much patience and resignation, for he that is to come will come and will not tarry. Endeavor to draw a distinct line between the doctrine of Christ and the doctrine of men; remember that whenever you deny total moral depravity you implicitly deny the doctrines of sovereign grace as being necessary to change the heart and renovate the soul, without which poor sinners never will nor never can be saved; therefore let us glorify God for the riches of his grace, which will reign unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.